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ABSTRACT

The extent to which the social maladjusted female role among the Eastern Band of Cherokees is a consequence of cultural ambivalence is investigated. The 28 problem families were examined in light of the adolescent/accommodative perspective whereby Federal paternalism is viewed as perpetuating a dependent adolescent behavioral life style among marginal Cherokees caught between two unobtainable cultural objectives: the traditional conservative harmony ethic vs. the dominant protestant ethic. The cultural identity problem is greater for the marginal Cherokee female than for her male counterpart. For men, cultural ambivalence takes the form of overtly aggressive behavior; for the female, there is a tendency to resort to sexual activity, which in turn enhances her biological role model. This subsequently results in early pregnancies, unwed mothers, premature marriages, and early divorces as well as child neglect, a situation made more significant by the matrilocal and matrilineal Cherokee family pattern. The marginal female, although having greater access to physical stigma resulting from social failure, has less of a chance to escape the anomic situation prevalent on the reservation, resulting in a continuation of these problems that are primarily transmitted through the primary family setting. (Author/KM)

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SOCIAL PROBLEMS AMONG CHEROKEE FEMALES: A STUDY OF CULTURAL AMBIVALENCE AND ROLE IDENTITY

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To what extent is the prevalence of the socially maladjusted female role among the Eastern Band of Cherokee a consequence of cultural ambivalence? Twenty eight problem families are examined in light of the adolescent/accommadative perspective whereby federal paternalism is viewed as perpetuating a dependent, adolescent behavioral lifestyle among marginal Cherokee caught between two unobtainable cultural objectives: the traditional, conservative harmony ethic and the dominant, protestant ethic. Pressure to conform to the dictates of the dominant cultural value system with its emphasis on assimilation yet with limited avenues for such, and the increasing inaccessibility to the traditional, conservative Cherokee lifestyle spells failure for many reservation residents.

The cultural identity problem is greater for the marginal Cherokee female than for her male counterpart in that she suffers the more visible and lasting stigma associated with cultural failure on the reservation. For the male, cultural ambivalence takes the form of overtly aggressive behavior such as fighting, drinking, car racing etc., while for the marginal female there is a tendency to resort to sexual activity which serves to enhance her biological role model. This subsequently results in early pregnancies, unwed mothers, premature marriages, and early divorces as well as child neglect, a situation made more significant by the matrilocal and matrilineal Cherokee family pattern. The marginal female while having greater access to physical stigma resulting from social failure, has less of a chance to escape the anomic situation prevalent on the reservation, resulting in a continuation of these problems on the reservation since they are mostly transmitted through the primary family setting.

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SOCIAL PROBLEMS AMONG THE CHEROKEE FEMALES: A STUDY OF CULTURAL AMBIVALENCE AND ROLE IDENTITY

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THE PROBLEM:

Social problems among the female Cherokee pose perplexing questions concerning both the extent of aboriginal behavioral survival and the nature of accommodative adaptation to the white dominant culture. These questions aside, the fact that certain contemporary bevavioral patterns among the Qualla Cherokee are problematic is a reality to both the tribe and to the larger white dominant culture. The nature of these problems increasingly involves deviant defined overt aggression behavior, a trend indicative of anomie resulting from both tribal and White dominant cultural normlessness.

A plausible perspective applicable to this phenomenon is the cultural ambivalence framework where the dilemma of limited accommodation stemming from the denial of an indigenous ethnic heritage on the one hand and inaccessibility to full assimilation into the dominant culture on the other leads to cultural and social normlessness and confused role identities. Here Federal paternalism is seen as constituting the major factor contributing to this accommodative situation.

Other theoretical perspectives with similar frameworks include the works of Horton, Lemert, Sellin, Newman and Reasons. Horton's (1966) conflict theory is addressed primarily to Black/White relations in America but applies to Indian/White relations as well. He asserted that existing majority/minority relations are designed by white liberals who advocate the imposition of the dominant value structure upon the minority sub-culture under the guise that full assimilation is the ideal objective. This approach often heightens

the tension situation regarding majority/minority relations because the minority group is enticed into forfeiting their subcultural value system for the inaccessible, dominant cultural value system. Failure to achieve "success," according to the dominant value definitions of such, is viewed as a consequence of personal inadequacies and not due to cultural and social differences between the majority and minority groups. The problem with the "White liberal" approach, stated Horton, is that it is based upon an orderly perception of society and does not account for the many, ever present sources of conflict existing in society.

Lemert (1964), writing on the relationship between ethnic pluralism, accommodation and deviation, posited that value pluralism arises when the dominant values of a culturally distinct group are extended to become a basis for normative regulation of minority subcultures having divergent values. By definition, deviation from the dominant cultural value system constitutes crimes, social problems or other forms of social wrongs subject to sanctions and penalties imposed by the dominant group or elite.

Sellin (1938) presented a similar argument in his work concerning conflict of conduct norms stating that criminal law and its sanctions often reflect the moral ideals of the dominant majority ignoring different or contravening subcultural normative control systems. Conflict arises when all members of a society are not equally committed to the norms of the dominant ruling group forcing those who deviate to choose between their minority controls and those of the dominant culture.

Horton, Lemert, and Sellin presented arguments similar to those stated by their earlier predecessors Hume, Pareto, and Scheler. Hume's concept of cultural value relativism as against moral absolutes most probably influenced Pareto in his work concerning the circulation of the elite and Scheler's cultural phenomonology. More recently, Merton and C. Wright Mills adapted these concepts to the American scene. Basic to all these works is the notion that societal values are relatively defined by the power elite and not in terms of some moral absolute. Equally important, each of these scholars, in their own way, showed the fallacy of imposing a uni-cultural value system upon a heterogeneous society, a situation prevalent in the United States.

Newman (1973) outlined three majority/minority social doctrines describing them according to Mannheim's terminology (ideology, utopian, and concervative utopian) and showing how each doctrine interprets the present. Assimilation or majority-conformity is endorsed mainly by the dominant, majority group and described as being "ideological" according to Newman. This doctrine interprets the present through the recent past. Amalgamation, or the melting pot doctrine, is supported mainly by the minority group in the hopes that they will become absorbed into the larger dominant culture. This doctrine is "utopian," interpreting the present through what the minority hopes to be their near future. The last doctrine, cultural pluralism (nation of nations) is again endorsed by the minority or out-group being labeled as a conservative utopian idea viewing the present through the distant past hoping to revive a dead cultural past and

superimpose it into the present social situation. While all three models constitute "ideal types," some variation of these doctrines are used to justify existing social mandates vis-a-vis majority/minority relationships. Conflicting ideological perceptions of the nature of majority/minority relationships, by those involved, only complicate matters.

THE RESEARCH SETTING:

The majority/minority relationship among the Qualla Cherokee represents one of these ambiguous situations. The Bureau of Indian Affair's ideal mandate supports the assimilation doctrine where it is assumed that majority conformity will result in the Cherokee becoming totally absorbed into the larger White dominant society. The Cherokee themselves are split between the amalgamation and cultural pluralism doctrines with the white or middle-class Indians supporting the former and the real or phenotypical Indians, the latter. The result of this tripartite interpretation of the Cherokees' role within the larger dominant culture has been cultural ambivalence and role identity crises for many of the Boundary members and a mounting problem for the dominant White control apparatus on the Reservation.

Reasons (1972) in his study on crime and the American Indian found that American Indians have the highest crime rate of any racial group, suggesting that anomie and cultural conflict may well be the cause of this phenomenon. He stated that the unique history of Indian-White relations can be viewed in terms of continual culture conflict leading to social disorganization and anomie which results

in excessive drinking and criminal behavior among the Indians.

The Eastern Cherokee differ from other Indian groups both in their historical culture and contemporary situation. Although it is believed that once both the Cherokee and Iroquois Indians were of the same tribe covering what is now the entire eastern United States and Canada, Whiteman's contact with the early Cherokee showed that their aboriginal culture was unique even when compared with other non-literate groups such as the Creek, Catawba, and Choctaw Indians. John Reid (1970), in The Law of Blood documented the ethnocentric awe shown by early recorders of aboriginal Cherokee behavioral patterns, especially those related to the male/female social roles. One early authority of the Cherokee, James Adair wrote: "The Cherokee are an exception to all civilized or savage nations, in having no laws against adultery...allow(ing) their women full liberty to plant their brows with horns as oft(en) as they please, without fear of punishment" (Reid, 1970:115). Reid goes on to say that even neighboring tribes such as the Creek and Choctaw considered the behavior patterns of the Cherokee women to be immoral and considerably liberal vis-a-vis their own.

The reason for this controversy, interpreting and understanding early Cherokee behavioral patterns stems from their equalitarian, existential conception of the individual and their harmony ethic governing interpersonal relationships. These aspects of their culture differ considerably from the dictates of the Protestant Ethic, therefore providing a ethical clash when viewed from an ethnocentric perspective, which often is the case.

The preservation of individual autonomy regardless of gender, was and still is an important ideal among the Cherokee people. Their own name for themselves translates to mean "the Principle People." Cherokee is merely a whiteman's label which has survived its obscure origin. The individual during aboriginal times was allowed considerable latitude in his or her behavior. Control mechanisms were primary and informal rather unlike the secondary and enforced dominant control mechanism which exist today on the reservation. When the Cherokee individual seriously transgressed another person, the clan or tribe, personal vengeance or retaliation was used to right the wrong. Individual culpability was determined by circumstance and not dictated by any formal statute or moral absolute. Culpability often did not involve personal accountability, for a third person or object could be viewed as the cause. When revenge was warrented the clans involved acted as corporate individuals and jointly resolved the matter. Even serious transgressions such as homicide were settled privately between clans. The entire judicial control process represented a rational, secular process. Public or tribal adjudication of internal domestic or personal problems was used only when the clans encountered difficulty in handling the matter themselves, and even then the tribal council acted in an advisorary capacity to the clans.

The emphasis on individual autonomy among the aboriginal Cherokee was supported by the Harmony ethic (Thomas, 1958). The Harmony ethic provided the Cherokee with a metaphysical system of belief from which they derived their identity, as well as providing for social controls regulating both inter and intra tribal interaction. Their ethic stressed

the importance of individual independence and the avoidance of overt agressiveness and a complex informal behavioral pattern emerged to support this ethic. Third persons were used to convey dissatisfaction in dyadic relations and the third person or object was often used to blame a breakdown in the Harmony ethic-for example alcohol was and is often blamed for altercations between Cherokee. Other characteristics of the Harmony ethic include a resentment of authority, a hesitancy to command others, reluctance to refuse request made by other Cherokee, obligatory hospitality and sharing with kinfolks, impassivity regarding greetings and exchanges, the refusal or unwillingness to contradict others, and the absence of gestures in public speaking (Hollowell, 1946).

These attributes differ considerably from the Protestant ethic which stresses competition, personal aggressiveness and personal accountability.

In aboriginal times, seasonal wars (during winter) and stickball (during summer) provided legitimate avenues for aggression release for the males while the females experienced vicarious release as spectators or through other channels. These forms of legitimate aggression release provided multiple functions for the aboriginal Cherokee including status enhancement, ritual purification and aggression release from the austere demands of the Harmony ethic (Gearing, 1962).

Although the female Cherokee played somewhat subservient roles to the male regarding tribal status positions, they had considerably more individual freedom over family matters than did their European and American counterparts. The Cherokee were both martilocal and matrilineal with the male taking up residence in his wife's home within her clan. Marriages required the consent of the bride, and the female had exclusive control

of the children even possessing right to control surplus, unwanted children through infanticide-a homicide offense if initiated by the father. The female apparently also had considerable choice over their marital status with a tribal policy of open divorce and no sanctions for adultery.

Reid explained the degree of independence among aboriginal Cherokee females by stating that: "The bride did not become a member of her husband's clan, nor did he gain any rights over her or her property. When she became a mother, his clan had no interest in her children, and if she became a widow, she looked for support to her brothers - not her husband's clan, nor did she receive from them either protection or care (Reid, 1970:114)."

THE CURRENT SITUATION:

The situation today is one where the Cherokee are torn between their traditional Harmony ethic on the one hand, and the demands of the white dominant culture's Protestant ethic on the other. This situation is complicated with increasing pressure upon them to conform to numerous secondary control mechanisms causing considerable personal amvivalence among the Cherokee. The survival of the Harmony ethic and its demands for internalization of aggression coupled with restricted legitimate avenues for overt expressions of aggression, such as the proscriptions against wars and stickball, has created a situation where anomie, escapism and sporadic illicit modes of aggression prevails for many of the tribal members.

The conservative or"real" Cherokee still adhere to the Harmony ethic, speak the native language and attempt to adapt to the paternal/accommodative situation on the reservation without the traditional legitimate channels of overt aggression. The demands of the Harmony ethic become

suppressed with alcohol used as a mechanism for escapism. This process works for the most part, however it is interrupted by sporadic violence such as aggravated assault and homicide. These aggressive outburst are often blamed on a third party - here alcohol -a rationalization supported by the Harmony ethic. So, for the older conservative Cherokee, a combination of alcohol and the Harmony ethic help them adapt to the paternal/accommodative situation on the reservation.

The white or "middleclass" Indians, although few in number, are those most favored by the white dominant control structure. These tribal members have the highest paying and most prestigious positions in the administration of the tribe (excluding tribal government positions). They have internalized the Protestant ethic, are individually competitive and better educated than the other tribal members.

A third type of Cherokee, according to the Thomas's continuum (Thomas, 1958) is the generalized or marginal Indian, one torn between the demands of the Harmony and Protestant ethics. These tribal members often use alcohol as avenues of retreatism from their accommodative dilemma, but have not internalized the non-aggression value dictated by the Harmony ethic, hence are more prone to express themselves in overtly aggressive ways, contrary to Cherokee tradition. The generalized Cherokee most likely is a younger Cherokee (teens to late thirties) since the enforcement of secondary controls has been effective only within the past few decades on the reservation. Their problem is that they are torn between the primary family socialization where the Cherokee language is spoken and the Harmony ethic adhered to, and the demands of the dominant secondary control mechanisms insisted upon by the B.I.A. and other federal and state agencies. The generalized or

marginal Indian finds it hard to escape this situation since most recently compulsory education has been strictly enforced on the Boundary while in the past this was not the case.

The problem, however, is not merely a choice between the traditional Harmony ethic and the dominant Protestant ethic since neither of these present viable solutions to the problem. In the first place the Qualla Boundary has changed so much since the Second World War that there are few areas left on the 57,000 acre reservation which are conducive to the conservative Cherokee lifestyle (Snowbird and Big Cove communities being the last strongholds). Secondly, full assimilation into the dominant white culture is not a plausable reality either since the B.I.A. operated in such a way as to perpetuate an accommodative, dependent environment and not one of self-sufficiency and independence, something the Cherokee proved they were adept at when they created a modern nation based on that of the United States in the period from the late 1700's to removal in 1838. Their cultural ambivalence is exacerbated when they become aware of their highly developed yet unobtainable past culture. And by the time they are formulating their identity and planning for adulthood the marginal Cherokee becomes aware they have not been adequately prepared for the white dominant culture, even if sufficient legitimate positions existed for them to occupy.

In essence, the marginal Cherokee is expected to continually act in an adolescent way with the strongest reinforcement coming from the paternalistic, dominant control agencies, a process similar to Lemert's (1951) "secondary deviance" where societal control mechanisms operate in such a way as to create the same problems they are allegedly manifested

to control. While the adolescent/accommodative phenomenon is problematic to both the male and female Cherokee the situation is worse for the famale since male superordinance is one of the white cultural values the Cherokee, especially the male, have come to accept. This means that the marginal Cherokee famale's problems are compounded by having male partners who insist on playing the dominant role. Within the adolescent/accommodative perspective the marginal Cherokee male acts, regardless of his age, in ways defined as masculine according to dominant cultural standards: fist fights, being tough, hot-rodding, drinking and being able to handle women. These same male peer-group behavioral patterns are unacceptable in terms of the Harmony ethic.

Females, in contrast, are denied many of the aggression release and status enhancement avenues available to their male couterparts, therefore, they must often resort to their sexual assets as a way for providing status recognition and role identity. In other words, the marginal Cherokee female in attempting to determine her identity often plays complementary and supportive roles to the marginal male in his quest for status and identity. However, unlike other minority groups caught in similar situations the Cherokee still have a strong sense of individual freedom and most female Cherokee simply leave what they consider to be intolerable domestic situations whether this involves burdensome mates or offsprings. Here we see close parallels between their aboriginal and contemporary behavior but for entirely different reasons. In fact, the contemporary Cherokee famale seems less co-opted by the dominant white culture and less a slave to its accommodative dictates than her male counterpart.

Both male and female Cherokee are psychologically and socially restricted regarding physical mobility in that few leave the Qualla Boundary for any great periods of time. The psychological restrictions are nourished by both the Harmony ethic and the adolescent/accommodative dependency situation at the reservation. Social restrictions exist in the modes of job and housing discrimination directed toward the Cherokee by the local Southern Appalachian whites. Kupferer (1966) documented the local white negative stereotype toward the Cherokee as the former viewing the latter as being sexually promiscuous, dirty, shiftless and irresponsible regarding family matters. At any rate, this limited mobility leads to the existence of a complex, aviodance interaction pattern whereby separated partners, parents, children, relatives and/or in-laws live in close proximity yet avoid personal contact. The extent of this avoidance process becomes more significant when it is realized that nearly 7,000 Cherokee live within the confines of the 57,000 acre reservation, many forced into some avoidance situation.

QUALLA'S SOCIAL PROBLEMS:

Keeping in mind the arguments presented above, especially the contravening social control mechanism involved at the reservation, lets turn now to the nature and extent of social problems on the Boundary. Most (80 percent) of the Cherokee members live below the poverty level earning less than $3,000.00 annually for a family of four. Many of these members also suffer from major health problems such as hypertensive diseases, diabetes, bronchitis and endocrine, nutritional and metabolic disorders. Related to these physical disorders is the fact that many Cherokee are over-weight with no clear consensus as to whether this is a symptom or cause of the other health problems. Many of these problems

afflict women since they represent 60 percent of the reservation roll. Female also account for a good number of the "heads-of-household" due, in part, to some continuation of the matrilocal residence pattern and to the high degree of broken families.

Out of the reservation population there were 594 recognized cases of severe alcohol related family problems in 1973, 416 who were heads of household. Other reported family and personality problems, for the same period, included 1,492 mental disorders, 1,067 larceration cases, 2,645 accidents, poisonings and violent assaults and 22 cases of venereal disease. These statistics only represent the cases brought to the attention of the Boundary health clinic and do not account for hidden problems or those handled by other sources such as medicine men. The nature of these cases better fit the adolescent/accommodative perspective than they do either the Harmony or Protestant ethics.

The female has a greater chance of being involved in these social problems since: one, she is disproportionally represented in Cherokee society; two, she is often the victim of Cherokee male violence; and three, she is the major socializing agent of Cherokee children, almost always emerging as head-of-household in family breakups, therefore being directly involved with problematic children of both sexes.

A sample of 23 problem families was analyzed as to family size, marital status, occupation, education, age, and the prevalence of alcohol and arrest among the parents. Fifteen were "court cases" meaning their children were processes before the North Carolina 30th judicial district court, while 8 families accounted for the 18 Indian children at the Cherokee Children's Home located on the reservation.

The court case families averaged 5 children per family with 3

large families with 10 children, while the Children's Home averaged 5.5 children with one large family with 9 children.

TABLE I: FAMILY ORGANIZATION

FAMILIES:	PARENTS TOGETHER*	UNWED MOTHER	PARENT DECEASE	SEPARATED	FATHER DESERTED	DIV-ORCE	N
COURT CASES	9	1	3	0	1	1	15
CHILDREN'S HOME	4	1	1	2	0	0	8
TOTAL	13	2	4	2	1	1	23

*Means that a man and women live in household-not necessarily biological parent

Table I shows that 13 of the 23 families had a husband/wife team although these people need not be legally married or the children's biological parents. Two mothers were unwed, 4 families had the father dead (two were murdered), while 2 families were broken through separation, 1 through divorce and 1 through desertion.

Twenty-one of the 23 families fell into Hollingshead's lowest socio-economic category (#7) while two were in category 5. The former included many unemployed, welfare and marginal part-time jobs. The category 5 jobs were that of teachers-aids in the public schools. A federally funded job requiring a high school degree.

TABLE II: EDUCATION

FAMILIES:	COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL	SOME HIGH SCHOOL	NO HIGH SCHOOL	NO INFOMATION	N
COURT CASES	1	3	10	1	15
CHILDREN'S HOME	1	1	5	1	8
TOTAL	2	4	15	2	23

Table II, Family Educational Level, shows that only 2 of the 23 families had parents who completed high school; 4 families had some high school while 15 had no high school at all. Information was unavailable on the educational status of two families.

TABLE III: AGE OF PARENTS

FAMILIES:	YOUNG FAMILIES (20s - 30s)	MIDDLE-AGED FAMILIES (30s - 40s)	OLD FAMILIES (40s - 60s)	N
COURT CASES	8	5	2	15
CHILDREN'S HOME	2	1	5	8
TOTAL	10	6	7	23

Table III shows that there were 10 young families with both the parents in either their twenties or early thirties, 6 middle-aged families (30s - 40s) and 7 old families with the children's parents in their late forties to sixties. Eighteen of the 23 families (11 court cases and 7 Children's Home families) had parents with alcohol related problems. This included 10 mothers. Thirteen families had arrest records, most alcohol related, including 6 mothers (1 for murdering her husband).

Eight of the court case families lived with the wife's mother lending support to the continual existence of the aboriginal matrilocal residence pattern. Similar information was not available concerning the Children's Home families. Eleven of the 15 court case families had

histories of children being born out of wedlock. Again, no corresponding information was available for the Children's Home families; however, Cherokee Health Clinic officials estimated that 1 in 4 childbirths at the Reservation are out of wedlock.

The 23 family pilot sample corroborates the general statistical profile provided by the Cherokee Health Clinic, especially concerning the extent and degree of family disorganization and alcohol related problems prevalent on the Reservation. Many of these problems have a greater effect on the female since, regardless of the nature of the problem, she is the one who suffers the most severe consequences of these actions, such as getting pregnant, being left with dependent children and so on and so forth. In addition, because of the greater likelihood that she will become the head-of-household if the family situation disintegrates, she has the additional burden of being liable and responsible for any troublesome male children. Holzinger (1961), in a study of the contemporary Cherokee, noted a similar phenomenon when he stated that the broken Cherokee family situation is made worse by the father's conspicuous indifference toward the children and even in the regular family situation, the father is frequently absent from the household often providing irregular support of the family.

So, while the marginal Cherokee female may be less a slave to the dictates of the white dominant culture she is more susceptible to the existing cultural ambivalence present in the adolescent/accommodative situation. She is limited to the physical confines of the reservation for the same reasons the male is with the additional stigma of being

a socially dependent female. On the reservation she is labeled with more visible and lasting stigma and reminders of her failure. Her financial dependence upon the B.I.A. or other secondary control agencies for her and her children's subsistence along with her separation from, and the denial of, the traditional conservative life-style and its harmony ethic, leaves her vulnerable to anomie and its subsequent symptoms: family disorganization, mental and physical illness and alcohol retreatism.

CONCLUSION:

The anomic situation on the Qualla Boundary most likely will increase in the foreseeable future since, more and more, secondary controls are being instituted on the reservation. If these controls are not directed toward their ideal objective, that of assimilation, then the current problems are certain to continue. The awareness of these problems on the Qualla Boundary should be an indication to the dominant control agents in Washington, D.C. that their policies are not working according to their manifest ideals and that most likely latent or unintended functions operate.

Some would argue that the latent function, that of maintaining and perpetuating a dependent/accommodative situation on our Indian reservations may well be the intended function of the dominant control apparatus. At any rate, failure at the Qualla Boundary probably also signifies failure at the other reservations since historically the Eastern Cherokee represent one of the most successful tribes of American Indians. Today they represent the largest Federal Indian Reservation in the Eastern United States and differ from other reser-

vations in that they are not isolated in some desolate geographic area. Instead millions of tourists each year travel through the reservation either for the attraction itself or enroute to the Great Smcky National Park, which it is adjacent to. Yet, even with these economic and social advantages little monetary and cultural benefits seem to filter down to the Cherokee themselves.

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